



INTERNATIONAL TAMIL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE NETWORK

B5
017

Raising the voice of the invisible

I-TRAN Report on search for durable solutions for Sri Lankan Tamil refugees

October 2018

By David Matas and Sam M. Ratna





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1983, the civil war in Sri Lanka has displaced over a million Tamils from their homes. The displaced Tamils fled to western countries and neighboring South East Asian countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and India seeking refuge. While many of the displaced Tamils have successfully integrated into their communities, there are over 173,301 Tamil refugees including asylum seekers and no-registered refugees in 58 countries, most of them in neighboring South East Asian countries. *(See the Map on P.4 & 5 - Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees and Table 2 resettlement in various countries).*

International Tamil Refugees Assistance Network (I-TRAN) is a non-governmental organization that has been actively involved in helping refugees displaced by violence, conflict and persecution to survive, recover & rebuild their lives. In addition to assisting refugees, our mission is to build awareness and advocate for the needs of Tamil refugees.

(See projects section 4 - on page 10 for a summary of projects I-Tran has been involved in over the years).

I-TRAN hopes to lend a voice to the voiceless refugees and internally displaced people. We have a moral responsibility to speak out about the pains, challenges, injustice and non-democratic actions we have witnessed during our visits to Tamil refugees in places like Malaysia, Indonesia etc.

If the Tamil diaspora population living across the world can support and lend our voices to the voiceless refugees and internally displaced people for Human Rights it will draw the attention of the international community and governments to deal with this matter. The voice of the Tamil diaspora has the power to change the plight of Tamils refugee in globally and internally displaced people grappling below poverty line in North and East of province of the Island of the Sri Lanka.

“ I-Tran hopes to lend a voice to the voiceless refugees and internally displaced people.”

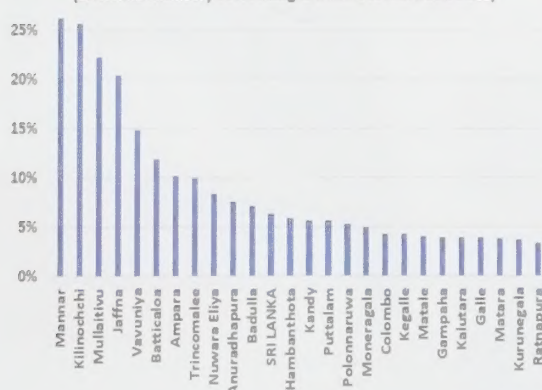
INTERNATIONAL TAMIL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE NETWORK

BACKGROUND

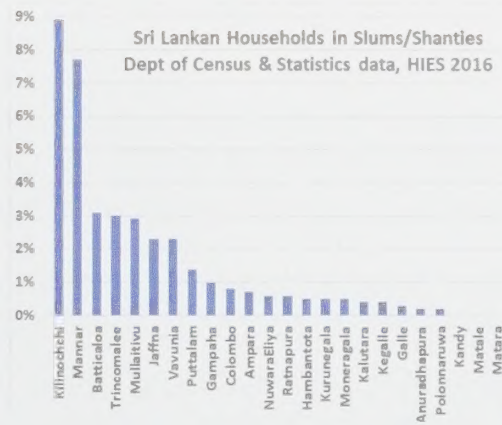
Over the last few years our Coordinator Mr. Sam M. Ratna has travelled widely with David Matas, Human Right and Refugee Lawyer and other partners attending several meetings with UNHCR and government authorities in Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangkok, India, Brazil, Geneva and other countries to address the plight of Eelam Tamil refugees. While there are some common themes (namely access to housing, employment, health care and education for their children) to the problems faced by the refugees, the challenges are unique to how each country treats them. I-TRAN met some Tamil refugees in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, India and Brazil. [\(See the images on page 16-19\).](#)

More than 9 years after the end of the civil war, the internally displaced people in the northern districts remain in a far worse economic state than the rest of the country. The Household Income and Expenditure Survey done by the most recent Department of Census & Statistics and the Ministry of Housing & Construction figures suggest that in 2016 there were about 90,000 families in the Northern Province who were living in shanties, slums, or were homeless. If the below data is depressing, worse is yet to come.

Percentage of Families who are Homeless
(Sri Lanka Ministry of Housing & Construction 2016 Data)



Sri Lankan Households in Slums/Shanties
Dept of Census & Statistics data, HIES 2016



EUROPE

1 AUSTRIA

Refugee 67
Asylum Seeker 47
Total Value 114
Total Population 114

3 BULGARIA

Refugee --
Asylum Seeker 6
Total Value 6
Total Population 6

5 CZECH REP.

Refugee 14
Asylum Seeker 3
Total Value 17
Total Population 17

7 ESTONIA

Refugee 12
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 12
Total Population 12

9 FRANCE

Refugee 24,110
Asylum Seeker 1,463
Total Value 25,573
Total Population 25,573

11 GREECE

Refugee 40
Asylum Seeker 58
Total Value 98
Total Population 98

2 BELGIUM

Refugee 394
Asylum Seeker 100
Total Value 494
Total Population 494

4 CYPRUS

Refugee 25
Asylum Seeker 172
Total Value 197
Total Population 197

6 DENMARK

Refugee 71
Asylum Seeker 21
Total Value 92
Total Population 92

8 FINLAND

Refugee 107
Asylum Seeker 19
Total Value 126
Total Population 126

10 GERMANY

Refugee 3,863
Asylum Seeker 1,608
Total Value 5,471
Total Population 5,471

12 HUNGARY

Refugee 12
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 12
Total Population 12

ICELAND

Refugee 5
Asylum Seeker 1
Total Value 6
Total Population 6

NORWAY

Refugee 218
Asylum Seeker 13
Total Value 231
Total Population 231

CANADA

Refugee 4,195
Asylum Seeker 868
Total Value 5,063
Total Population 5,063

UNITED STATES

Refugee 1,270
Asylum Seeker 1,545
Total Value 2,815
Total Population 2,815

MEXICO

Refugee 19
Asylum Seeker 10
Total Value 29
Total Population 29

SPAIN

Refugee 100
Asylum Seeker 51
Total Value 151
Total Population 151

PORTUGAL

Refugee 48
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 48
Total Population 48

SENEGAL

Refugee 87
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 87
Total Population 87

TOGO

Refugee 0
Asylum Seeker 6
Total Value 6
Total Population 6

GUINEA

Refugee 8
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 8
Total Population 8

BENIN

Refugee 7
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 7
Total Population 7

ECUADOR

Refugee 14
Asylum Seeker 6
Total Value 20
Total Population 20

PERU

Refugee 0
Asylum Seeker 7
Total Value 7
Total Population 7

BRAZIL

Refugee 18
Asylum Seeker 17
Total Value 35
Total Population 35

CHILE

Refugee 37
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 37
Total Population 37

ARGENTINA

Refugee 37
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 37
Total Population 37

Table 1: UNHCR - Resettlement Statistics on Sri Lankan Tamils between 2008 till end of December 2017

No	Country	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total Value
1	Australia	283	251	134	279	17	81	20	18	2,662	07	3,752
2	Brazil	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	11
3	Canada	55	77	93	67	31	42	25	14	09	07	420
4	Czech. Rep	-	-	-	-	-	01	01	-	-	-	02
5	Finland	01	18	04	25	23	18	01	-	-	-	90
6	France	-	-	-	-	-	06	03	-	20	-	29
7	Germany	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	-	-	-	59
8	Iceland	02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	02
9	Netherland	16	08	-	42	23	14	15	-	-	-	118
10	Norway	43	09	08	04	-	-	-	-	-	-	64
11	New Zealand	02	06	15	15	31	79	70	23	15	11	267
12	Philippines	-	-	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	01
13	Sweden	14	04	04	04	-	09	-	-	-	-	34
14	USA	01	56	117	60	52	88	68	86	84	09	621
	Total value	417	429	375	496	177	339	273	141	2,790	34	5,470

IRELAND

Refugee 20
Asylum Seeker 13
Total Value 33
Total Population 33

ITALY

Refugee 517
Asylum Seeker 598
Total Value 1,115
Total Population 1,115

LITHUANIA

Refugee 10
Asylum Seeker 13
Total Value 23
Total Population 23

NETHERLANDS

Refugee 689
Asylum Seeker 23
Total Value 712
Total Population 712

ROMANIA

Refugee 2
Asylum Seeker 7
Total Value 9
Total Population 9

SWITZERLAND

Refugee 5,581
Asylum Seeker 1,833
Total Value 7,414
Total Population 7,414

ISRAEL

Refugee 0
Asylum Seeker 566
Total Value 566
Total Population 566

JORDAN

Refugee 5
Asylum Seeker 9
Total Value 14
Total Population 14

MALTA

Refugee 7
Asylum Seeker 1
Total Value 8
Total Population 8

POLAND

Refugee 49
Asylum Seeker 1
Total Value 50
Total Population 50

SWEDEN

Refugee 48
Asylum Seeker 39
Total Value 87
Total Population 87

TURKEY

Refugee 15
Asylum Seeker 6
Total Value 21
Total Population 21

UK

Refugee 5,804
Asylum Seeker 1,401
Total Value 7,205
Total Population 7,205

UKRAINE

Refugee 8
Asylum Seeker 64
Total Value 72
Total Population 72

KUWAIT

Refugee 0
Asylum Seeker 6
Total Value 6
Total Population 6

UAE

KENYA

Refugee 9
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 9
Total Population 9

NEPAL

Refugee 20
Asylum Seeker 4
Total Value 24
Total Population 24

INDIA

Refugee 97,351
Asylum Seeker 4
Total Value 97,351
Total Population 97,351

JAPAN

Refugee 59
Asylum Seeker 3,549
Total Value 3,608
Total Population 3,608

PHILIPPINES

Refugee 20
Asylum Seeker 1
Total Value 21
Total Population 21

NAURU

Refugee 101
Asylum Seeker 28
Total Value 129
Total Population 129

INDONESIA

Refugee 389
Asylum Seeker 144
Total Value 533
Total Population 533

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Refugee 21
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 21
Total Population 21

AUSTRALIA

Refugee 4,489
Asylum Seeker 3,258
Total Value 7,747
Total Population 7,747

NEW ZEALAND

Refugee 81
Asylum Seeker 16
Total Value 97
Total Population 97

ASIA

1 CAMBODIA

Refugee 5
Asylum Seeker 1
Total Value 6
Total Population 6

3 KOREA

Refugee 8
Asylum Seeker 115
Total Value 123
Total Population 123

2 HONGKONG

Refugee 21
Asylum Seeker 0
Total Value 21
Total Population 21

4 THAILAND

Refugee 156
Asylum Seeker 53
Total Value 209
Total Population 209

Internally displaced
persons in Sri Lanka
39,322

Plight of refugees in various countries

TAMIL REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA

Total Persons concerned: **4,300**

1,840

Refugees and
Asylum Seekers

2,460

Non registered and
rejected refugee status

According to the
UNHCR Agency, as of
end August 2018

- There are no refugee camps in Malaysia. Instead, refugees live in cities and towns across Malaysia in low cost flats or houses side by side local Malaysian homes. Often, they live in small flats which are overcrowded. It is not uncommon for four or five families, or dozens of individuals to share a living space for cost-savings and security reasons.
- There are no legal or administrative frameworks in place in the country to address the refugee situation. This creates a situation of great unpredictability and difficulty for refugees because of their lack of official status.
- By law, refugees are not distinguished from undocumented migrants, and therefore refugees are at risk of arrest, detention, and deportation for immigration offenses. They have no access to legal employment, but can work in the informal sector. Employers tend to exploit their dire situation by paying extremely low or no wages at all.
- Tamil Refugees have been struggling with healthcare and livelihood problems due to a limited subsistence allowance provided by the UNHCR which is inadequate for day to day needs. While refugees can access public and private healthcare facilities, just like any other resident of Malaysia the health needs of refugees are often neglected due factors such as cost of medical care, language barriers and difficulties in physically accessing hospitals and cities.
- Though there are 500 Tamil Public schools in Malaysia, over 1500 school age Tamil refugee children are not able to access education as they are denied a birth registration certificate by the government. This figure does not include children of those waiting to be registered with the UNHCR as well as children of those rejected in refugee status determination after appeal who remain in Malaysia.
- With every day they are denied proper education, they are denied the ability to develop themselves morally and intellectually for their future. It inhibits them from opportunities to better their lives. Creating a generation of unskilled or even illiterate community, unable to be self-sufficient or provide for themselves in the future.



TAMIL REFUGEES IN INDONESIA

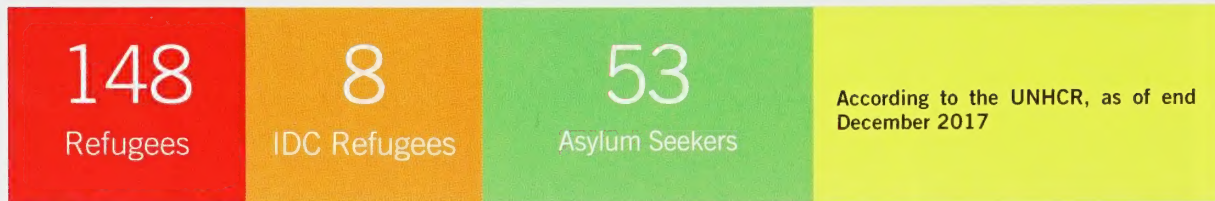
Total Persons concerned: **1,091**



- The United Nations Refugee Agency's offices in Indonesia have begun informing the nearly 14,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Indonesia that they should prepare to assimilate into Indonesia society as they best can, or consider returning to their strife – torn countries.
- There are around 450 Tamils Refugees, who are being kept in indefinite detention in more than five open refugee camps in Medan; we personally visited one of the five open camps in Medan. Living conditions at the camp is unspeakable and overcrowded. In addition, there is a closed-door detention camp. There are 13 immigration detention centers in Indonesia, most of which are overcrowded.
- According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Indonesia, there are Eelam Tamil asylum seekers also being detained in a number of other locations, as of January 31, 2014. (1) 36 in Belawan (Medan) (2) 25 in Tanging Pinang (3) 14 in Surabaya (4) 02 in Pekanbaru (5) 01 in Manado (7) 27 in Bali and (8) 03 in Jaipur. The total numbers of detainees are 108.
- As of end December 2017 there were 533 Tamils refugee registered with the office (389 refugees and 144 asylum seekers). Average waiting period from registration to first interview ranges from 8 to 19 months year depending on the case.
- Refugees and asylum seekers are not legally permitted to engage in income generation activities in Indonesia. Given limited opportunities to be self-sufficient, and the limited assistance programs provided by UNHCR through the NGOs. Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN refugee convention and refugees cannot legally work there while waiting for resettlement or returning to Sri Lanka.

TAMIL REFUGEES IN THAILAND

Total Persons concerned: **209**



A Tamil refugee we met in Thailand said that "A Refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his/her country because of persecution, war or violence and due to the civil war in Sri Lanka. Even if those have escaped persecution, war or violence, they are still facing many problems in their daily life. Thailand has given protection for the life but each day the lives for the refugees are getting tougher and tougher."

According to the UNHCR, as of end December 2017 there were 209 Tamils refugee registered with the office of 156 refugees and 53 asylum seekers.

- It is hard for the refugees to find work; even if they did the pay is too little. Sometimes they won't be paid and when they ask for it they might be threatened or even arrested by the police.
- As the refugees don't have access to stable employment, they find it difficult to afford reasonable housing. The rooms they live in are small, basically a box with four walls. Sometimes family members of 5 or 6 would have to live in those small rooms. This leads to many other problems such as invasion of privacy along with depression. In rare occasions religious organization provide support for a short period. Those who are fortunate to have friends or acquaintances in developed countries get some support from them.
- A number of refugees are not able to provide for basic needs of their family or even put

meals on the table. There are times when the adults in the household keep the food for the younger ones and starve themselves.

- Another major issue faced by the refugees in Thailand is the access to proper health care. UNHCR does not offer to help refugees get treatment unless they have relevant blood work. If the refugees want to get their own treatment, the cost of it is too high.
- Many refugees have been affected by mental illness like depression.
- Most of the children are not able to access education through proper schools. The future of the children is affected by the lack of education.
- The refugees, not only face these problems but also security problems. As refugees don't have valid document, they can be arrested by the police in Thailand. Those who are arrested are detained in the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC). During the detention in the IDC, there is no proper food for them and the living condition is very poor. Some refugee family gets split into groups when they are imprisoned in IDC. Young children and girls are sent with their mothers to separate cells, while boys are sent along with their fathers. While those who are not arrested fear arrest everyday of their life. The refugees don't leave their rooms due to this reason and those in IDC barely breathe in fresh air. See the immigration detention center picture.

- The refugees are not only facing these problems but also by the UNHCR. The refugee status determination procedures along with resettlement are another problem faced by the refugees in Thailand. Many of the refugees are waiting long time for a change in their life. The refugees are enduring many difficulties in their daily life and they are unable to raise the voice for their rights as they have lost their rights. The refugees are unable to study, work, have proper living space, proper access to health care and are facing discrimination. There is nothing more for them to endure anymore, this is the life of refugees in Thailand.

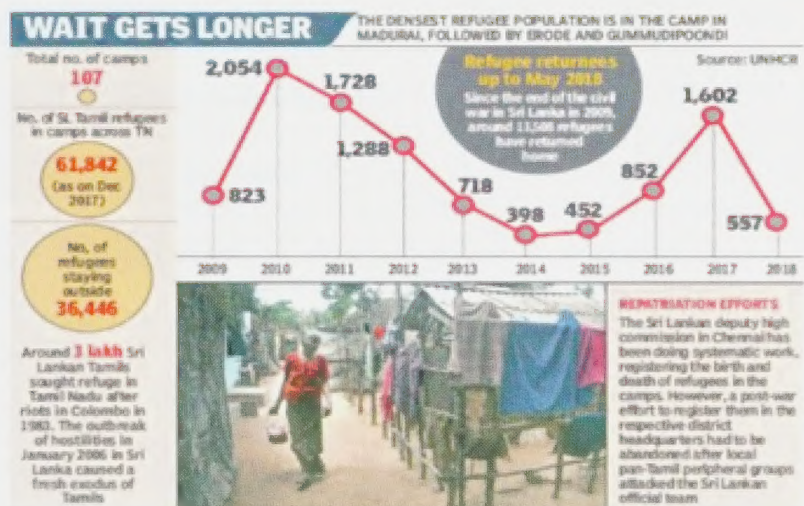
TAMIL REFUGEES IN INDIA

Total Persons concerned: **96,783**



Since 1983, approximately 300,000 Tamils have fled to Tamil Nadu, India seeking refuge. Over the year some of them have migrated to other parts of the word and other have got voluntary repatriation in different phases.

According to the policy note of public Department as on May 1, 2018, as many as 61,422 persons were now staying in 107 refugee camps in 24 districts of the state as on May 1, 2018. "In addition, 35,316 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are staying outside the camps as on April 30, 2018, who have their registration with the local police. According to a recent report tabled by Chief Minister K.Palaniswami in the State Assembly, more than 3,000 Sri Lankan refugees have left for their home country since 2015. In addition, 1520 refugees left for Sri Lanka last year (2017), 557 of them have been repatriated till May 2018. Source: UNHCR.



“ On the other hand, there are about 29,000 refugees staying in the camps claiming their Indian origin.”

One of the main reasons behind reluctance of returnees is finding a livelihood in a country grappling with high inflation. Today, a family of four in the island nation needs at least a couple of thousands of rupees (Sri Lankan) a day to survive. Not long after the war, the Lankan government spoke of 90,000 war widows' among Tamils, possible with children and elderly parents to support. This high cost of living in the country means those wanting to return from India may find it difficult to get a stable job.

In the above all light, a pilot study among camp & non-camp refugees in Tamil Nadu completed the survey by Tata institute of social sciences in Mumbai supported by Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection. They did survey out of the 250 respondents who chose local assimilation as a durable solution, 52% of them were Sri Lankan Tamil origin followed by 47.2% of Indian Tamil origin. However, among the 85 respondents preferred for voluntary repatriation, 69.4% of respondents were Sri Lankan Tamil origin and 29.4% of Indian Tamil origin. According to the survey Table 2 below, local integration would be the viable option, an option which I-TRAN wishes to continue to explore and promote durable solution for Sri Lankan Tamil.

Table 2

Country of origin
and preferred
durable solution



Projects

PROJECT 1: 2011

ECUADOR - SOUTH AMERICA

Objective:

Resettle Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in Ecuador.

Outcome:

Twenty-One refugees fleeing Sri Lanka were detained in jail by the Ecuador government. When I-TRAN learned about the situation of these refugees, we contacted the Human Right Protection Officer of the UNHCR. After constantly working with the Protection Officer and the Foreign Affairs Ministry, we were

successful in obtaining their release and obtain refugee status. With help from UNHCR, Some of the 21 refugees have now migrated to western countries.



PROJECT 2: 2011

TOGO – WEST AFRICA



While signature countries to the Refugee Convention like Ecuador have assisted asylum seekers and refugees, others have not lived up to their commitment to human rights. One country in particular was the West African country of Togo. I-TRAN (NGO) received a phone call from within a refugee camp from one of the detainees who reported the arrest of 203 Tamil asylum seekers on November of 2011. They were detained at the National Gendarmerie Police Station. The detainees including 19 women, children and infants, said they had to endure bad weather and humiliating treatment by Guards at the local stadium.

I-TRAN notified the UNHCR protection Officer Ms. Stephanie Woldenberg of the arrival of these refugees. The detainees reported the detention center's inadequacy and poor standards, including the lack of medical facilities for those who were ill. There were also complaints from the female refugees of Togo officers taking their pictures while

bathing. Ms. Woldenberg assured the detainees of their protection, but after December 25, 2011, she was denied access to them by the Togolese authority.

Outcome:

Most of asylum seekers were deported to Sri Lanka; some are now in neighboring countries. Sixteen remain in the detention camp. I-TRAN was not able to continue this project due to lack of financial support.

PROJECT 3: 2012

DUBAI - UAE



On October 19, 2012, I-TRAN received calls from Melbourne, Australia, Tamil working group that a boat carrying 46 asylum seekers from Bunbury, Western Australia to Jebel Ali, Dubai, United Arab (UAE) was sinking. I-TRAN asked UAE foreign ministry and UNHCR authorities not to deport them to Sri Lanka and requested the UAE authorities were requested to allow the Tamil asylum seekers temporary protection. The UAE authorities generously hosted this population, providing them with shelter, food and other form of humanitarian assistance while granting full access to the UNHCR.

Outcome:

Of the 46 refugees, 45 have been re-settled in USA, Sweden, Finland and Brazil. I-TRAN continues to work on its efforts to re-settle the one remaining refugee in this camp.

PROJECT 4: 2012

INDONESIA – SOUTH EAST ASIA

The Christian Science Monitor reported that “Around on October 2009, 225 Tamil asylum seekers headed towards Australia were detained off the coast of Indonesia. Amongst the asylum seekers were 27 women and 31 children, who pleaded with the Australian Prime Minister to accept them into the country. The Indonesian authorities, a year later, allowed the Sri Lankan Navy to interrogate the detainees.

Outcome:

On positive note, I-TRAN stated that “women and children were released from custody, after Canadian International refugee lawyer David Matas visited the Indonesian authorities, foreign affairs Ministry and NGOs on this matter.” Some are released & resettled in industrialized countries, while other are still waiting for resettlement efforts to conclude.

PROJECT 5: 2013

SWITZERLAND

Met Foreign Affairs Committee in Bern, Geneva on June 2013

David Matas and Sam Ratna along with representatives from other organizations met foreign affairs Committee in Bern, Geneva and were successful in temporarily stopping the deportation of Tamil Refugees deportation from Switzerland.

PROJECT 6: 2013

SWITZERLAND



Met the Head of Protection Officer in UN, Geneva on December 22, 2013

David Matas (Attorney at law) and Sam Ratna met Head of Protection officer in UN, Geneva. We discussed about the UNHCR guide line. The outcome is UNHCR revised guide line from 2010 to 2013 is released on December 22, 2013.

PROJECT 7: 2013

STOPPED DEPORTATION OF A TAMIL REFUGEE FROM CANADA

Successfully stopped a deportation of refugees using the revised guideline from UNHCR for this case.

PROJECT 8: 2013 / 2014

INDONESIA

In December 21, 2013, there was news that nine Tamil youths have been detained in the Indonesian prison for 11 months without outside contacts. I-TRAN immediately attempted to contact them through David Matas, the International Human Rights Lawyer.



He travelled to Jakarta and met with the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). He also went to Kalideres to try to meet with the detained nine the day before he was scheduled to leave Indonesia, but was denied access.

Outcome:

- ▶ Based on current statistics obtained from IOM Indonesia, there are total of 108 Tamil asylum seekers also being detained in several locations.
- ▶ We are notified four of the nine asylum seekers are granted refugee status and released them from detention on April 22, 2014. I-TRAN is continuing to work towards the release of all the detainees. Recently we were notified that one of the nine asylum seeker apple case has been accepted

PROJECT 9: 2014

MALI

I-TRAN brought the plight of a refugee in Mali to the attention of the UNHCR. Recently we notified, the Tamil refugee went to Europe.

PROJECT 10: 2015

RE-SETTLED IN CANADA

I-TRAN sponsored refugee family (Parents and two children) from Malaysia in 2010 to resettle in Canada.

Outcome:

They arrived in Canada in September 2015 and now live in Toronto, Canada.

PROJECT 11: 2017 / 2018

SPONSORED

I-TRAN Sponsored 2017/2018 for one family (parents and a son) and one individual from Malaysia and two siblings from Thailand to resettle to Canada. Sponsors are waiting for reply from Canada visa post from Canadian immigration.

PROJECT 12: 2019

RESETTLEMENT

- (a) I-TRAN will continue our effort to explore and promote local integration as a viable option in countries with a large number of Tamil citizens.
- (b) The Tamil population of Mauritius is 115,000, representing approximately 10% of the population of Mauritius population. The local Tamil community can be a support to facilitate the integration for Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. While Mauritius is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention, it does not need to be a signatory in order to resettle refugees. I-TRAN will work with the Mauritius authorities to explore and promote this as a viable option.

CONCLUSION



Though the protracted ethnic war in Sri Lanka was declared over in 2009, the status of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees continues to be nebulous and uncertain. Governments and stakeholders, including the

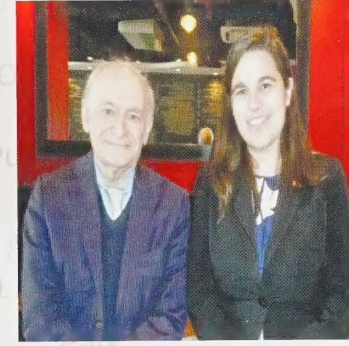
Tamil diaspora, should work to develop durable solutions. In our attempts to find durable solutions, we met many Tamil refugees in India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and other countries.

These meetings have helped us understand the experience and perceptions of these refugees languishing in these countries. I-TRAN will continue to work with policy makers and stakeholders, taking into account the views of the refugees themselves, to find durable solutions.

I-TRAN Advocacy group activities

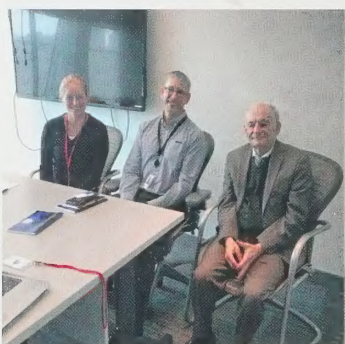


2010 - 2018



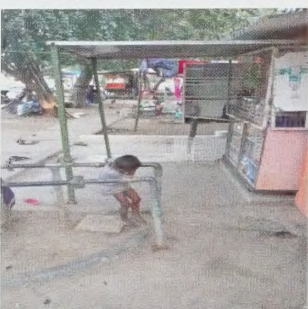
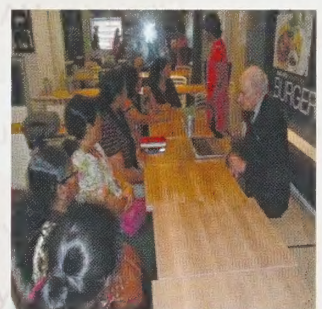
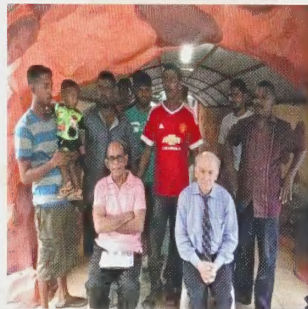
I-TRAN Advocacy group activities

2010 - 2018

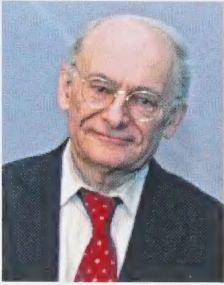


I-TRAN Meeting Tamil Refugees

2010 - 2018



CO-FOUNDERS



David Matas

Director
Honorary
Legal Counsel

David is an international human rights, immigration and refugee lawyer based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Mr. Matas has been practicing international human rights, refugee and immigration law for the bulk of his professional career.

His work has received recognition through a number of awards. In 2010, he was inducted into the Order of Canada. That year he was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.



Suzie de Lucia

Director
Research Assistant

Suzie holds a BA Double Honors in Political Studies and Philosophy from the University of Manitoba. Her passion for Human Rights and Social Justice began with her volunteer work at various non-profit organizations in Winnipeg. She has been a student activist and advocate of democratic rights through spearheading the 'Vote Anyway' campaign.

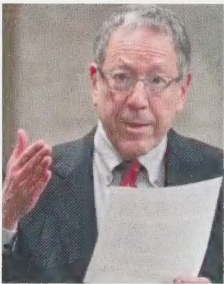


Sam M. Ratna

Director
Country Coordinator

Sam is graduated as a Civil Engineering from East London University, London, UK. Extensive experience over 25 years in construction management and engineering in construction industry. Based in Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada. In the last few years he has travelled widely with David Matas, attending several meetings with UNHCR and government authority in Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangkok, India and other countries to address the plight of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees.

ADVISORY COUNCIL



Irwin Cotler

Mr. Cotler was a professor of law at McGill University and the director of its Human Rights Program from 1973 until his election as a Member of Parliament in 1999 for the Liberal Party of Canada. He has also been a visiting professor at Harvard Law School, a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Yale Law School and is the recipient of ten honorary doctorates. He was appointed in 1992 as an Officer of the Order of Canada.



Tom Denton

Tom is a writer, speaker and consultant on immigration policy.

Tom Denton has been since 2006, the Executive Director of the Administrative and Sponsorship work of Hospitality House Refugee Ministry of Winnipeg that historically has been a prolific private sponsor of refugees. It currently has 5,000 refugees under its active sponsorship. But Tom has been personally involved in the private sponsoring of refugees since the program began in 1979.



Sharry Aiken

Sharry Aiken is an associate professor and former associate dean at Queen's University, Faculty of Law in Kingston, Ontario. Her teaching portfolio includes international refugee law, international human rights law, and other public law courses. Her current research engages with the complexities and challenges posed by immigration and border security measures as well as the impact of these measures on asylum seekers, refugees and the communities they have established in Canada.

STUDENT GROUP



Kobra Rahimi

Kobra Rahimi holds a Bachelor degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Winnipeg and she is currently in her second year of Law student at the University of Manitoba with an interest in Immigration and refugee law.

Having been born and raised at a refugee camp herself, Kobra is very passionate in advocating for the safety and rights of all refugees and expertise as a law student to work with I-TRAN to be a voice for Tamil Refugees worldwide



INTERNATIONAL
TAMIL REFUGEE
ASSISTANCE
NETWORK

www.i-tran.ca



Andrew Vanderhorst

Andrew Vanderhorst is currently completing his honors degree major in political science and minor in history with York University in Toronto, Ontario. Andrew is the recipient of the York International Mobility Award and was a member of the Model United Nations at York University.

Andrew currently resides in Winnipeg, finishing his degree through the University of Manitoba and holds a position with the Manitoba Young Liberals as VP Policy. he has been actively engaged and working to organize awareness for I-TRAN with hopes of aiding in the process of resettling Tamil refugees seeking asylum from Sri Lanka

“ It always seems impossible until it is done.”

-Nelson Mandela-